

signum  
CLASSICS

TOMÁS LUIS DE VICTORIA

# REQUIEM MASS, 1605

T

TENEBRAE

NIGEL SHORT



# REQUIEM MASS, 1605 VICTORIA

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TENEBRAE  
NIGEL SHORT DIRECTOR

Tomás Luis de Victoria's requiem mass for six voices, written in 1603 and published in 1605, is a masterpiece. For many, it represents what Renaissance polyphony is, what it sounds and feels like, and how expressive it can be. For those who have come to know it through an interest in 'early music', some would be bold enough to say it sits comfortably beside works like Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Mozart's own Requiem mass, and perhaps even Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as one of the truly great achievements in the history of music; a masterpiece, if there ever was one. However, it is still very much known as 'early music'. Despite the efforts and protestations of many performers, it is often appreciated through the lens (or is it actually a filter?) of the 'academic exercise'. A barrier exists – in different places for different people – between 'early music' and 'not early music' which affects our relationship with what we hear, how we engage with it emotionally, how we believe we are expected to evaluate its performance, and even the extent to which we allow it to excite and overwhelm us.

So, what is a masterpiece? Perhaps it is precisely that work of art which, through its greatness, forces us to forget history; when it was written, in what circumstances, by whom, and for whom. The

greatness of the thing itself exists outside time and is as impressive now as it was at its creation. A great composer needs only to encapsulate his idea in notation and a great performer needs only to understand it and communicate it to a receptive audience. This is music, not modern music or early music, new or old. But surely an understanding of the artists' life contributes to an understanding of his art. After all, the artist was a person, creating art to be experienced by other people, at a specific time and in a specific place. A true understanding of the work therefore requires the acceptance of this idea and of these limits. Isn't all this talk of universality, transcendence, and timelessness in art just a bit of dreaming? Time definitively separates us from the past. The best we can do is understand history's facts and attempt to approach a recreation of another time. The closer we come to 'actually being there', the closer we get to being the artist himself and thereby to understanding the creation of his art – in other words, relating to and interacting with the art in the most intense way possible.

This is the problem. We are all familiar with the staggering success many have achieved by attempting to be 'historically informed' about the music they perform. While in academic circles

these theoretical arguments have raged for a few decades now, in concert and on disc the historical 'added value' brought by the continued integration of academic research into performances has enjoyed great popularity. Indeed, it is precisely this enthusiasm which has brought works such as Victoria's six-voice requiem mass to such widespread familiarity. But what makes some works stand out? Why is it that, regardless of our fascination with the historical information we consume with such delight, we are sometimes forced to encounter the difficult question of music's timeless appeal? It doesn't matter how far we dig into history; great music refuses to be limited, to be understood, to elicit any response except astonishment, humility, awe, and all of the other more important feelings for which there are no words.

Perhaps as a demonstration of this, below is an outline of the historical facts surrounding the creation of Victoria's six-voice requiem mass. Tomás Luis de Victoria was born in Avila, 55 miles north west of Madrid, in 1548. He attended the choir school at the cathedral there under the tutelage of Bernardino de Ribera and Juan Navarro, both well-known composers in 16th-century Spain. He was educated at a Jesuit

school in Avila before his voice broke and in 1565 he was sent to Rome to be first a singer and later director of music at the Collegio Germanico, a Jesuit foundation training priests for German missionary work. He was ordained a priest in 1575 and remained in Rome working mainly as a cleric, securing an income from his association with two large religious houses in Rome as well as benefices in Spain, but also publishing books of masses and motets. In 1585 he was made chaplain to the Dowager Empress María, sister of King Philip II of Spain. María lived at the *Monasterio de las Descalzas de S. Clara* (Royal Convent of Barefoot Nuns of St. Clare) in Madrid with 32 other cloistered nuns in extraordinary luxury; the nuns were widowed or unmarried noblewomen, each bringing an endowment. Victoria became director of music at the convent, supervising 12 adult singing priests and 4 boys. He also had a personal servant, private meals served to him, and a month's holiday every year (from 1592 until 1595 he managed to expand his month's holiday to three years!) and he was even joined at the convent by one of his brothers, Agustín, who was also a chaplain. In 1603, the Empress died and in 1605 Victoria published the music he wrote for her burial observance (which would have lasted all day if not for many days) in a

publication entitled *Officium defunctorum: in obitu et obsequiis sacrae imperatricis* (The Office of the Dead: for the death and obsequies of the holy empress). María left money in her will which allowed Victoria to remain at the convent until his death in 1611.

Does this information help us to appreciate the music Victoria wrote more than 400 years ago? Does it aid in its appreciation to visualise 30 or so wealthy, cloistered, barefoot, aristocratic women sitting in a magnificent chapel in central Madrid, listening to this music performed by 12 men and 4 boys, mourning the loss of their matriarch, perhaps their friend? Or does it help to realise that it was published and disseminated throughout Europe, performed in the early 17th-century at perhaps hundreds of other ceremonies of varied descriptions by choirs of all sizes and abilities? Does it help to remember that Victoria likely considered his job as María's chaplain as a 'retirement' position? With this his last publication, was Victoria summing up his life's work, or attempting to continue his successful but still nascent relationship with his Spanish printer? Does it make a difference that Victoria relinquished the post of director of music for that of organist in 1604, one year after María's

death, and spent the last seven years of his life with less responsibility?

Alonso Lobo's story raises similar sorts of questions, though the differences between the lives of Victoria and Lobo must have been apparent to both men. Lobo was born in 1555 in Osuna, a small town 50 miles east of Seville. Lobo was educated in Seville and Osuna, becoming a priest in Osuna before beginning his employment at Seville cathedral in 1591. He journeyed north for eight years to take a job at the cathedral in Toledo, but returned to Seville to spend the rest of his life as director of music there. Lobo's life seems to us less cosmopolitan than Victoria's. Lobo didn't enjoy royal patronage and certainly didn't live surrounded by luxury in a royal convent in Madrid, serving the king's sister. As far as we know, he never spent time outside of Spain. While Victoria and Lobo at least corresponded, it is likely that Lobo was viewed by his contemporaries, perhaps as we do today, as outside of the top tier of musicians, stuck in the south of Spain, off the map. The music *Tenebrae* have here recorded was most likely written while he was in Toledo (as was most of his surviving music), perhaps before Victoria wrote his six-voice requiem, and while its emotive power is obvious, so is the

difference in style from that of Victoria's requiem music; more chromatic, more adventurous, more extroverted. Can we be certain that the influence of the great Palestrina, whom Victoria knew in Italy, was so great that Lobo, only seven years Victoria's junior, already represented a coming wave of musical experimentation that Victoria missed or eschewed? Did Lobo's marginalisation cause him to adopt a more adventurous style in order to attract attention? Did Lobo even feel marginalised at all or was he happy to spend his life in the south of Spain away from the limelight?

Any attempt to contextualise great works of art results in questions like these. However, as modern musicians and music lovers, we must not forget that we are necessarily confronted with the practical consequences of these fragmentary histories. If we were somehow able to kneel with the nuns in Madrid in 1603, understand what it felt to have their relationships, live their lives, experience their understanding of the world, would we think the music was more beautiful or powerful? As we have no information regarding the specific use of either of the Lobo pieces recorded here, are we necessarily at a loss as to their meaning

or how best to interpret them? Does the fact we know more about the creation of Victoria's music than Lobo's mean it affects us more, is more powerful, is 'better' art? Crucially, does our own awe and wonder at this music lack such validity that we must seek to vicariously experience the emotions and understandings of our artistic ancestors?

Tenebrae's performance of this music seeks to express the beauty and power hidden below the surface of historical circumstance, that which marks out true masterpieces as works of art wholly mysterious in their wonder and timeless in their meaning. Their energy, dedication, and precision are here matched by music of extraordinary quality. The result is a vivid manifestation of what Victoria and Lobo – and all musicians and artists – must surely want; an expression of inexplicable beauty.

Greg Skidmore

**1 Versa est in luctum**

Alonso Lobo

Versa est in luctum cithara mea,  
et organum in vocem flentium.  
Parce mihi, Domine,  
nihil enimsunt dies mei.

*My harp is turned to mourning,  
and my music into the voice of those that weep.  
Spare me, O Lord,  
for my days are as nothing.*

**Requiem Mass, 1605**

Tomás Luis de Victoria

**2 Lesson: Taedet anima mea**

Taedet animam meam vitae meae,  
dimittam adversum me eloquium meum,  
loquar in amaritudine animae meae.  
Dicam Deo: Noli me condemnare:  
indica mihi, cur me ita iudices.  
Numquid bonum tibi videtur,  
si calumniaris, et opprimas me,  
opus manuum tuarum,  
et consilium impiorum adiuves?  
Numquid oculi carni tibi sunt:  
aut sicut videt homo, et tu vides?  
Numquid sicut dies hominis dies tui,  
et anni tui sicut humana sunt tempora,  
ut quaeras iniquitatem meam,  
et peccatum meum scruteris?  
Et scias, quia nihil impium fecerim,

*My soul is weary of my life;  
I will let go my speech against myself,  
and express the bitterness in my soul.  
I shall say to God: Do not condemn me,  
but show me why Thou judgest me in this manner.  
Shall it seem a good thing to Thee  
to cheapen me and oppress me,  
the work of Thine own hands,  
and to support the schemes of the wicked?  
Are Thine eyes of flesh?  
Dost Thou even see only as men do?  
Is Thy life like the life of men,  
and do Thy years pass like the days of men,  
that Thou shouldst enquire after my iniquity,  
and investigate my sins?  
Surely Thou knowest that I have done no wrong*

cum sit nemo, qui de manu tua possit eruere.

*and there is no man that can deliver me from  
Thy hand.*

**3** Introit: Requiem aeternam

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.  
Te decet hymnus Deus in Sion,  
et tibi reddetur votum in Ierusalem:  
exaudi orationem meam.  
ad te omnis caro veniet.

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,  
and let light perpetual shine upon them.  
A hymn, O God, becometh Thee in Sion,  
and a vow shall be paid to Thee in Jerusalem:  
give ear to my supplication,  
unto Thee shall all flesh come.*

**4** Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.  
Christe eleison.  
Kyrie eleison.

*Lord have mercy upon us.  
Christ have mercy upon us.  
Lord have mercy upon us.*

**5** Gradual: Requiem aeternam

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.  
In memoria aeterna erit iustus:  
ab auditione mala non timebit.

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,  
and let light perpetual shine upon them.  
The just man shall remain in memory everlasting:  
of ill report he shall not be afraid.*



6 Offertory: Domine, Jesu Christe

Domine Iesu Christe, Rex gloriae, libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni, et de profundo lacu. Libera eas de ore leonis, ne absorbeat eas tartarus, ne cadant in obscurum: sed signifer Sanctus Michael repraesentet eas in lucem sanctam: Quam olim Abrahae promisisti et semini eius. Hostias et preces tibi, Domine, laudis offerimus: tu suscipe pro animabus illis, quarum hodie memoriam facimus: fac eas, Domine, de morte transire ad vitam, Quam olim Abrahae promisisti et semini eius.	<i>Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, deliver the souls of all who died in the faith from the pains of hell and from the deep pit. Deliver them from the lion's mouth, lest the jaws of hell swallow them, lest they fall into everlasting darkness. But let Saint Michael, the leader of hosts, bring them forth into Thy holy light, as Thou promised before to Abraham and to his seed. We offer sacrifice and prayers of praise unto Thee, O Lord: receive them on behalf of those souls whom we remember this day: grant them, O Lord, to pass over from death to life, as Thou promised before to Abraham and to his seed.</i>
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7 Sanctus & Benedictus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth, pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Osanna in excelsis.	<i>Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, the heavens and the earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest.</i>
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Osanna in excelsis.	<i>Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.</i>

8 - 9 Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona eis requiem.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona eis requiem.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona eis requiem sempiternam.

*Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,  
grant them rest.*

*Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,  
grant them rest.*

*Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,  
grant them eternal rest.*

10 Communion - Lux aeterna

Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine.  
cum sanctis tuis, in aeternum:  
quia pius es.

*Let light perpetual shine upon them, O Lord,  
in the company of Thy saints for evermore;  
because Thou art merciful.*

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis  
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,  
quia pius es.  
Requiescant in pace. Amen

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,  
and let light perpetual shine upon them  
in the company of Thy saints for evermore,  
because Thou art merciful.  
Let them rest in peace. Amen.*

11 Motet - Versa est in luctum

Versa est in luctum cithara mea,  
et organum in vocem flentium.  
Parce mihi, Domine,  
nihil enim sunt dies mei.

*My harp is turned to mourning,  
and my music into the voice of those that weep.  
Spare me, O Lord,  
for my days are as nothing.*

12 Responsory - Libera me, Domine

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,  
in die illa tremenda:  
Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra  
dum veneris iudicare saeculum per ignem.

Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo,  
dum discussio venerit, atque ventura ira.  
Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra.

Dies illa, dies irae, calamitatis et miseriae,  
dies magna et amara valde:  
Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per ignem.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna,  
in die illa tremenda:  
Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra:  
Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per ignem.

Kyrie eleison.  
Christe eleison.  
Kyrie eleison.

*Deliver me, O Lord, from everlasting death  
on that fearful day,  
when the heavens and the earth shall be moved  
and Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire.*

*I am seized with trembling, I am sore afraid,  
for the day of judgement and for the wrath to come,  
when the heavens and the earth shall be moved.*

*That day, a day of wrath, calamity and woe,  
a great day and bitter indeed,  
when Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire.*

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,  
and let light perpetual shine upon them.*

*Deliver me, O Lord, from everlasting death,  
on that fearful day,  
when the heavens and the earth shall be moved,  
and Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire.*

*Lord have mercy upon us.  
Christ have mercy upon us.  
Lord have mercy upon us.*

<sup>13</sup> De lamentatione, Ieremiae, Prophetæ.

<sup>14</sup> Heth.

<sup>15</sup> Misericordiæ Domini quia non sumus consumpti,  
quia non defecerunt miserationes eius.

<sup>16</sup> Heth.

<sup>17</sup> Novi diluculo, multa est fides tua.

<sup>18</sup> Heth.

<sup>19</sup> Pars mea Dominus, dixit anima mea:  
propterea expectabo eum.

<sup>20</sup> Teth.

<sup>21</sup> Bonus est Dominus sperantibus in eum,  
Animæ quaerenti illum.

<sup>22</sup> Teth.

<sup>23</sup> Bonum est praestolari  
cum silentio salutare Dei.

<sup>24</sup> Teth.

<sup>25</sup> Bonum est viro cum portaverit iugum ab  
adolescencia sua.

<sup>26</sup> Iod.

<sup>27</sup> Sedebit solitarius, et tacebit:  
quia levavit super se.

<sup>28</sup> Iod.

<sup>29</sup> Ponet in pulvere os suum,  
si forte sit spes.

<sup>30</sup> Iod.

<sup>31</sup> Dabit percutienti se maxillam:

*From the Lamentations of Jeremiah.*

*Heth.*

*By the mercies of the Lord we are not consumed,  
because his compassions have not failed.*

*Heth.*

*They are new every morning, great is his faithfulness.*

*Heth.*

*The Lord is my portion, saith my soul:  
therefore will I hope in him.*

*Teth.*

*The Lord is good unto them that waiteth for him,  
to the soul that seeketh him.*

*Teth.*

*It is good that a man should both hope  
and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.*

*Teth.*

*It is good for a man that he hath borne the yoke  
from his youth.*

*Jod.*

*He sitteth alone and keepeth silence:  
because he hath borne it upon him.*

*Jod.*

*He putteth his mouth in the dust:  
if so there may be hope.*

*Jod.*

*He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him:*

saturabitur opprobriis.

<sup>32</sup> Ierusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

*he is filled full with reproach.*

*Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.*

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## BIOGRAPHIES

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### TENEBRAE

Hailed as “one of the country’s most outstanding vocal ensembles” (Evening Standard), Tenebrae has established itself as the chamber choir of choice for critics and audiences in the UK and around the world. Founded and directed by Nigel Short, the group blends the passion of a large cathedral choir with the precision of a chamber ensemble to create a unique and enchanting sound, one which is as dazzlingly effective in mediaeval chant as it is in contemporary works. With every recital exploiting the unique acoustic and atmosphere of the venues in which they perform with movement and light, often using candlelight as the sole means of illumination, the carefully chosen team of singers enable the audience to experience the power and intimacy of the human voice at its very best.

Formed in 2001, the group was launched to critical acclaim with a performance of Nigel Short’s own composition, *The Dream of Herod*.

Since then they have collaborated with Sir John Tavener, Karl Jenkins, Pierre Thilloy, Alexander Levine, and Joby Talbot. Their dedication to the music of today is complemented by a commitment to the music of the past; from mediaeval chant to Romantic masterworks, they respond to the demands inherent in whatever they sing with equal passion and musicality.

The group has toured all over the world, visiting Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the USA and Bermuda, performing in many renowned festivals (BBC Proms, Montreux Choral Festival, Edinburgh Festival) and tailoring their distinctive performances to many venues (Royal Albert Hall, King’s College Chapel, Lausannes Cathedral). Working with the LSO under Sir Colin Davis, the English Concert, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Scottish Ensemble, and the Endymion ensemble, the choir have proved

themselves as adept at larger orchestral works as the a capella repertoire for which they are so well known.

Recording on the Signum, LSO Live! and Warner Classics labels, the group has released a variety of albums; from Christmas carols to solemn vespers, their revelatory performances have thrilled listeners across the world and ensured their continued position as one of the world's favourite choirs.

**[www.tenebrae-choir.com](http://www.tenebrae-choir.com)**

## NIGEL SHORT

Nigel began his musical life as a chorister at Solihull Parish Church going on to study singing and piano at the Royal College of Music in London. He began his career as a soloist in opera and oratorio and as a member of specialist vocal ensembles such as The Tallis Scholars whilst maintaining a regular involvement in church music, firstly as a member of Westminster Abbey Choir then Westminster Cathedral. He joined The King's Singers when he was 27 and stayed with them for seven years.

After a short break of about one ski season in the Swiss Alps he set about founding his own group,

Tenebrae, aiming to bring together what he loved best as a singer – namely the more passionate sounds of large Cathedral choirs and the precision of ensembles like The King's Singers – to create a new kind of choral group. Whilst embracing an eclectic repertoire, he wanted to have some 'signature' works that would make Tenebrae different, adding a theatrical element that would involve singers moving around as if on stage. To that end he wrote *The Dream of Herod*, with a central role for baritone Colin Campbell, and commissioned Joby Talbot to write *Path of Miracles*, premiered in July 2005.

In December 2006, Sir Colin Davis and the LSO chose Tenebrae to perform Handel's Messiah and Berlioz' L'Enfance du Christ to a sold-out audience at the Barbican.

Nigel divides his time between directing Tenebrae and giving an ever-increasing number of masterclasses and workshops for both professional and amateur vocal groups and choirs throughout Europe. He is also Director of Music at St Bartholomew The Great, London.

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**Sopranos**

Zoe Brown  
Natalie Clifton Griffiths  
Grace Davidson  
Susanna Fairbairn  
Joanna Forbes L'Estrange  
Emilia Hughes  
Amy Moore  
Katie Trethewey

**Altos**

David Allsopp  
Mark Chambers  
Clare Wilkinson

**Tenors**

Ben Alden  
William Blake  
Benedict Hymas  
Matthew Long  
Nick Madden  
Nick Todd

**Basses**

Gabriel Crouch  
William Gaunt  
Jimmy Holliday

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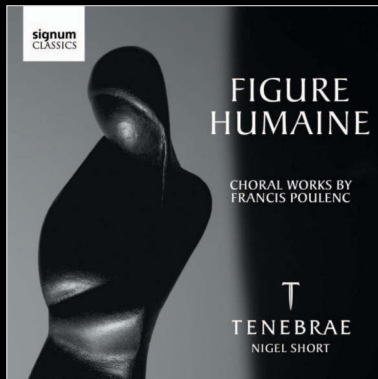


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